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Volume 67, Number 1 January 2015

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World Politics / Volume 4 / Issue 02 / January 1952, pp 159 - 185

DOI: 10.2307/2009044, Published online: 18 July 2011

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0043887100013344](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0043887100013344)

### How to cite this article:

Nathan Leites (1952). The Politburo Through Western Eyes. World Politics, 4, pp 159-185 doi:10.2307/2009044

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# THE POLITBURO THROUGH WESTERN EYES

By NATHAN LEITES

ONE of the factors in world politics which social scientists are beginning to subject to systematic analysis is that of elite behavior in international relations. While hypotheses about elite behavior appear to be not only essential to, but also implicit in, any formulation of foreign policy, it still requires to be demonstrated whether research of this order has any operational utility. Clearly, many students in this field have not articulated their assumptions about the conduct of elite groups in foreign affairs; it is often doubted that hypotheses based upon intensive investigation of the doctrine of elites and their cultural matrices have any bearing on the analyses usually pursued in the study of international relations.

In an effort to illustrate the utility of systematic and specialized research in this field, I shall discuss certain aspects of the image of the Moscow Politburo as presented by *The Economist* (London) in the period between Stalin's pre-election speech of February 9, 1946, and the invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950. The method followed will involve comparisons between judgments of Politburo intentions and behavior appearing in *The Economist* and judgments which might have been derived from the systematic analysis of the Bolshevik doctrine, and which I have briefly summarized in a recent book.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the statements of *The Economist*—one of the most competent and subtle Western periodicals on public affairs—which are discussed below have been refuted in the course of history; some seem to me to be doubtful on other grounds.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> However, I do not want to imply that at the time these statements were made the errors of *The Economist* were significantly larger than, for example, those of comparable leaders of American opinion. Also, I do not want to imply that the statements from *The Economist* quoted below are representative, with regard to their truth value, of all the statements made on Soviet foreign policy by *The Economist* during that period. For the purposes of this paper, the cases where the past estimates of *The Economist* diverge from history and from my own present estimates are often the most useful ones.

But this circumstance, far from pointing to any special characteristics of *The Economist*, only mirrors a major aspect of the relationship between the West and the Politburo during the last twenty-five years. Once the Soviet government had been accepted as a member of the system of great powers, the interpretations of Soviet behavior and intentions became subject to the tendency to view another in one's own image—a tendency that is particularly strong when the other is little known. This was true of the Politburo, and became ever more so as its seclusion, taciturnity, and public hypocrisy increased. On the other hand, the tendency to “project” one's own characteristics onto another will have particularly far-reaching consequences when the other is, in reality, very different. This, too, was and is true of the Politburo.

The Politburo itself has engaged in similar, if not greater, degrees of projection in fashioning its image of its Western enemies. It is likely—and this is one of the critical aspects of the present and future—that its distortions of the outer world are much less amenable to correction by experience than is the case in the West. In the pages to follow we shall see how, through the four years considered, *The Economist* has increased its capacity to assess and predict Politburo behavior.

I shall first discuss matters connected with the world balance of power after the end of the Second World War; then, matters concerning the so-called satellites of the Soviet Union; then, the nature of Politburo expansion; and, finally, negotiations with the Politburo.

### WHO—WHOM?

After the end of the Second World War the Politburo presumably believed that the world outside of its domain was controlled by the “Anglo-American ruling circles.” That is, from the moment of the defeat of Germany and Japan, the Politburo took for granted the division of the world into two blocs between which the always present question “who-whom?” would ultimately, sooner or later, with or without one or more wars, be put “on

the order of the day" by history. However, in 1946 *The Economist* wrote about relations between the Soviet Union and the West:

An obvious first step on the agenda of conciliation should be to mitigate the present tendency of international society to become divided into two mutually exclusive and hostile *blocs*. [September 28, 1946, p. 481.]

Here "conciliation" is regarded as an "obvious" and very positive term; there appears to be no awareness that it is exactly the opposite in Bolshevik language. The "division" of the world into "two mutually exclusive and hostile *blocs*" appears as a "tendency" which can be "mitigated," rather than as the very basis of the epoch, as I believe it does to the Politburo. A short while later *The Economist* wrote in a similar vein:

British policy cannot refrain from trying to promote a closer association among the nations of Western Europe. . . . The overriding purpose, however, must never be simply to build up one part of Europe against another; . . . every opportunity [must] be taken to find ground of common interest and undertaking with the Eastern states, to subordinate the *blocs* to a revived Concert of Europe. . . . [October 19, 1946, p. 612.]

In contrast, the Politburo takes it for granted that if a power, or a set of powers, is being "built up," it is, by the very nature of politics, directed "against another"; and that the "ground of common interest and undertaking" between the two blocs dividing the world is incomparably smaller—if it exists at all—than the ground for potential or actual attempts at annihilation. According to the Politburo, there is nothing to which the two blocs should or could be "subordinated."

In 1947 *The Economist* said about the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers:

If there was fundamental confidence between the three Foreign Ministers at any point, but particularly about the future economic organization of Europe, . . . most of the Moscow differences would disappear. [April 26, 1947, p. 616.]

But according to the Politburo, the very fact that the foreign ministers represented the "proletariat" and the "bourgeoisie"—classes which are capable of political insight, in contrast to the

"petty bourgeoisie" which is not—would preclude the illusion of fundamental "confidence" between organizations aiming, by the very nature of the situation, at each other's annihilation.

Similarly, *The Economist* said later in 1947:

. . . so long as the Russian-American duel continues *à outrance* UNO can be nothing but an assembly of partisans. [October 4, 1947, p. 554.]

But according to the Politburo, there are nothing but "partisans" in any political situation, regardless of whether the techniques of conflict employed in it are extreme in some particular (and, to the Politburo, irrelevant) sense or not.

According to the Politburo, all areas outside of the two power blocs are, or are about to be, controlled by one or the other of the blocs. But in 1946 *The Economist* wrote about relations between the Politburo and the West:

There is, perhaps [*sic*], no reason why a rough *modus vivendi* should not be reached on the basis of preponderant Russian influence in Eastern Europe and preponderant Western influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, with areas of genuine independence in Turkey, Italy and Western Europe. [July 13, 1946, p. 43.]

—the implication being that the Politburo would recognize the existence of such "genuine independence." Later in 1946 *The Economist* wrote about current opinions which it did not reject:

. . . spokesmen widely diverse in their political approach and newspapers representing as wide a variety of outlook . . . argue that the most immediate and most useful way in which Great Britain can help to break the ideological deadlock [between the Soviet Union and the non-Soviet world] is by pursuing in certain fields policies distinct from those connected with Mr. Byrnes, and in particular by seeking closer understanding with France, the other Great Power with most to lose as a result of the present extreme polarization between Communism and capitalist democracy. The closer association of Britain and France, it is argued, could help to prove that Europe need not be divided between two hostile, external Great Powers, and that methods of economic and political association exist which lie between the extremes of exclusive state trading and unfettered free enterprise. [September 28, 1946, p. 482.]

This seems to imply not only that the Politburo might come to recognize the possibility of a "third" position in the world system of power, but also the possibility of a "third" position in economic structure, and a connection between these two. These

are assumptions about Politburo beliefs which I would not make.

In the view of the Politburo, politics (in action or in explanation) must always be treated as a matter of high tension by "serious" specialists, regardless of the appearance of calm by which "political philistines" may be taken in. However, in 1946 *The Economist* wrote, looking back over twenty years of Soviet foreign policy:

Stalin's doctrine of "Socialism in one country" was designed to reconcile [the Party] . . . to settling down to a long prospect of peaceful coexistence of socialism and capitalism in the world. [March 23, 1946, p. 442.]

Such a "settling down," however, would mean that the Politburo had predicted a "long prospect" of the following kind: the Party, as well as its enemies, would continuously calculate whether they should make war against each other, and would continue to give a negative answer to this question in view of the relationship of forces. This, then, would be "settling down" to the usual maximal tension of "serious" politics. But, in 1946, having asserted that Soviet policy showed a "new mood of conciliation," *The Economist* asked:

Why the change? . . . It is difficult to find a really adequate reason. . . . Russian policy . . . is only beginning to learn the necessary techniques for dealing with opposition and disagreement. [May 4, 1946, p. 703.]

This implied that the operational code of the Politburo is highly responsive to changes in the environment. I would propose the opposite hypothesis: presumably it is still inconceivable to the Politburo that the level of danger in politics could decrease before its world victory (or annihilation).

Later in 1946 *The Economist* proposed "to recapitulate one or two of the steps by which they [the great powers] could, if they would, draw back from the brink of disaster," and said:

. . . the principal aim of the Powers is to restore a measure of cordiality. . . . [September 28, 1946, p. 481.]

—a statement which the Politburo would presumably regard as a consciously hypocritical one. The Bolshevik feeling is: one cannot assume that an "organ" of the "City" would even re-

motely be tempted to believe in such nonsense (*chepukha*), since, first, feelings are irrelevant in "serious" politics; second, cordiality is not the feeling appropriate to political organizations which stand in a "who-whom" relation. Somewhat later *The Economist* approached this view when it said:

. . . [the] leaders [of the Soviet state] would hardly know how to govern . . . without the atmosphere of a state of siege. . . . [November 30, 1946, p. 863.]

—except that these leaders presumably believe profoundly that the existence of conditions requiring such a state is constant. In 1948 *The Economist* acknowledged that high tension in a political game involving the Politburo is irreducible, and viewed this as a "tiresome" nuisance rather than as the expression of an epochal struggle:

. . . the Western Powers' best hope of peace lies in making it perfectly clear at what point Russian action might precipitate a war.

. . . In the past, Great Britain has based a large part of its dealings with Russia on precisely such an approach. The Eastern Question which was a permanent feature of nineteenth-century diplomacy was simply based on Russia's desire to expand to Constantinople checked by its knowledge that such an advance would lead to war with Britain. In seventy years, this tension did not lead to war. On the other hand, it very rarely slackened. The two nations simply lived with it—as one might with a tiresome relative. [September 25, 1948, p. 482.]

Oriented as the Politburo is on the basic power relationships of an epoch—which it believes change but slowly except during revolution and war—short-term fluctuations in public expressions and impressions of tension presumably appear as irrelevant in themselves (although they may, of course, be surface indications of important events). On the other hand, in 1946 *The Economist* wrote:

Eight months have passed since the first meeting of the Foreign Ministers. There has been a steady deterioration in the relations between the Great Powers. . . . it may even be that the December Conference [of the foreign ministers in Moscow] accelerated the Allies' descent into the present slough of suspicion, irritation and disunity. [April 20, 1946, p. 626.]

However, it is likely that the Politburo would not have considered this "deterioration" in its relations with the Western

powers as a major event, as it saw as the core of the historical epoch beginning with the defeat of Germany and Japan the conflict between itself and these powers. As against the ever-present orientation on "who-whom" between itself and them—an orientation involving maximal "suspicion" and "disunity"—changes in the level of expressed "disunity" and "suspicion" would appear as rather irrelevant, except if they could be taken as indicators of impending major actions. As for "irritation" (as well as "moods of conciliation"), serious politicians like those in Wall Street, the Kremlin, and the City will not permit it to influence their actions, although they may express or simulate irritation according to expediency.

Later in 1946, *The Economist* welcomed a "conciliatory" statement made by Stalin:

. . . the most significant . . . reversal of the recent trend towards open hostility has come from Marshal Stalin himself. In an interview to the Correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, he reversed almost every recent line in Soviet propaganda by stating that he did not believe "capitalist encirclement" to be either possible or intended, that there was no menace of atomic war and that the atomic bomb might be prohibited and that Communism and capitalist democracy could live peacefully side by side.

. . . at least . . . for a brief time the spell of universal ill-will has been weakened, however slightly. . . . [September 28, 1946, p. 481.]

In contrast, the Politburo—if the situation were reversed—would not necessarily assume that a momentary reduction in its enemies' verbal violence against it indicated a favorable shift in their policy; nor would it permit itself to feel, or express, pleasure about a seeming momentary decrease of tension: the efficient politician must always prepare for supreme crises, however remote they may seem; he must assess their nature and their probability by an over-all estimate of the power relationships of the epoch, and not permit himself to be subjected to swings between insightful extrapolations of current stability and emotional visions of imminent crisis.

*The Economist*, however, became much more comprehensible to the Politburo in 1948.



The war scare which has followed the news from Prague is neither rational nor dignified. . . . The strategic situation . . . is no different from what it was a year ago. [March 6, 1948, p. 367.]

and:

In these last few days, there has for the first time been something resembling a war scare. . . . One point that needs to be made is that the risk of war, whatever it may be, is no greater now than it was in June, or even earlier. Nothing new has now suddenly emerged. [October 2, 1948, p. 521.]

### THE PRINCIPLE OF PURSUIT

In 1945 the Politburo presumably took it for granted that the Western leaders, in consenting to the occupation of various East European areas by the Soviet Army, had consented (at least for the time being) to the establishment of full Politburo control in these areas at its convenience. It is not likely that the Politburo interpreted its obligation to install "democracy" in these areas differently from the interpretation it gives to its "democratic" obligations under the Soviet Constitution of 1936. Presumably in 1945 the Politburo took it as a matter of course that in those areas where it held only certain "commanding heights" (e.g., the ministries of the interior and of the armed forces), it would in due time proceed to the liquidation of all actual and potential dissent according to the patterns developed in the Soviet Union; thus applying the principle of pursuit and putting itself in a position to apply, against any resurgent dangers, the rule of *principiis obsta*. However, in 1946 *The Economist* spoke of:

The fear which wrecked the London Conference and haunted the Ministers' deliberations in Moscow—the fear of a Southeastern Europe dominated completely by Russia. . . . [May 11, 1946, p. 743.]

Thus *The Economist* presented as a mere probability something which must have appeared as a certainty to the Politburo, except in the case of a Western ultimatum or attack. Somewhat later *The Economist* wrote:

Today, the Balkan states . . . are powerless. It does not follow that they will remain so. . . . It is not only a modification of Great Power

policy that can upset the present delicate equilibrium of forces. It can be disturbed by upheavals in the smallest state. [July 13, 1946, p. 43.]

While Yugoslavia proved to be a case in point, the passage still seems to deny the strong tendency of the Moscow Politburo to establish full control in the "satellite" areas. So does the following statement:

. . . the idea of a new Concert of Europe . . . is one . . . which will surely find some response in countries within the Soviet orbit. . . . [October 19, 1946, p. 612.]

In a similar vein *The Economist* commented in 1947 on the refusal, on Politburo orders, of all "satellite" governments to participate in the Marshall Plan:

This united Eastern European reaction, coupled with fresh evidence of Russian leadership, will naturally reinforce in the Western mind the picture of a closed *bloc* lying in captivity behind the Iron Curtain. . . . And from this picture, the conclusion will be drawn that Europe has reached a decisive parting of the ways and that Eastern Europe must be written off as an integrated, exclusive and captive client of Russian state power. But is this conclusion a fact warranted? . . . A careful examination of Eastern European development in the last two years suggests a far less uniform—and less depressing—picture. The broad fact of Russian influence is not in doubt, but the vigor and variety of the Eastern lands are equally real.

. . . There can be little doubt that, in the event of a war, Russia would be able to count on the co-operation of its neighbors. It does not follow, however, that they would be parties to aggression. [July 19, 1947, p. 91.]

Later in 1947, however, *The Economist* began to express a view similar to the one suggested here. Recalling the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Territories, it wrote:

The Russians were apparently unable to imagine how anyone could take it seriously; it appeared to them merely a face-saving formula for American acquiescence in the partition of Eastern Europe into spheres of influence, on which an understanding had already been reached between Marshal Stalin and Mr. Churchill. When the Americans, basing their policy on the Declaration, protested against the Vishinsky *coup d'état* which put M. Groza in power in Rumania, the Kremlin regarded it as a double cross. [November 1, 1947, p. 711.]

And in an article entitled "The Fall of Prague," in the issue of February 28, 1948, *The Economist* said:

There was absolutely no need for Communist domination [in Czechoslovakia] as a guarantee of Russian security. But . . . the men in the Kremlin do not want friends. The human race is for them divided into enemies and slaves. Not until power is monopolized by a Communist clique . . . can the Kremlin be satisfied with any country. The *Gleichschaltung* of South-Eastern Europe had already provided some fairly convincing examples. But there was still hope that this technique would not be applied in Czechoslovakia. Now the hopes are shattered. The process will take time to complete, just as the process initiated at Munich was not completed until March 1939. But the decisive step has been taken. [p. 332.]

The article does not indicate on what beliefs about the Politburo the "hope" for Czechoslovakia had been based.

In 1950 *The Economist* presented a view more fully coinciding with the one suggested here:

The Russians have never made any secret of the fact that, for them, there are only two kinds of state—Communist states under complete Russian control and anti-Communist states to be treated as hostile. The policy of imposing Russian control on as many states as possible . . . dates back, in execution, to the middle of the war, and in conception to the earliest days of the Bolshevik régime. The creation of an all-Communist government for Poland began in 1943. . . . The rest of the process . . . has developed inexorably from that first deliberate act. Yet this first step was taken at the height of Russia's wartime alliance with the West.

Similarly, the suppression of the German Socialists in the Eastern zone—which set in motion the sovietization of Eastern Germany—was undertaken in the winter of 1945-46. . . . The process of absorption had already begun by the time of Yalta. It was in full swing during the Potsdam meetings. What followed thereafter was simply the unfolding of a policy already determined, and, as the last five years have shown, in every country within the reach of Soviet arms—except Finland . . . the "third force" elements . . . or the "neutrals" with Western sympathies . . . have been steadily eliminated. [May 27, 1950, p. 1154.]

Prior to the autumn of 1947 *The Economist* had implied that a Politburo retreat from East European positions was possible, short of a Western ultimatum or attack. In 1946 *The Economist* spoke of

. . . British and American unwillingness to accept the iron curtain and to see Europe permanently divided . . . [May 11, 1946, p. 744.]  
—without indicating the extreme means necessary to make this "unwillingness" effective. On the contrary, *The Economist* showed:

. . . certain small but significant changes in Russian policy in Europe as pointers towards a potential slackening of Russia's grip on the Danubian countries. . . . The transfer of the whole of Transylvania to Rumania at the Peace Conference can be interpreted as a sign that in the long run the Russians might, if the present internal and external pressure were maintained, withdraw from Hungary completely. [May 25, 1946, p. 826.]

—implying that they would withdraw without having established alternative channels of control. At that time, *The Economist* recalled developments since 1945:

. . . by the time the London Conference [of foreign ministers in the fall of 1945] opened, one of the chief aims of British and American diplomacy had become to lessen the grip of Russia's "managed revolutions" and political predominance in Eastern Europe. Russian resistance to this pressure has created the diplomatic duel on which the Powers have since been engaged and which led to the breakdown of the Paris Conference. [June 1, 1946, p. 874.]

Again, it is implied that the Politburo might withdraw under merely "diplomatic" pressure. Late in 1947 *The Economist* assumed the possibility of a voluntary Politburo retreat from Eastern Germany in discussing the Moscow Conference of early 1947:

Over the political shape of Germany . . . there were chances for negotiation, greater here than anywhere else. British and Russian ideas about Germany's form of government were not fatally far apart. . . . [November 29, 1947, p. 867.]

Thus, according to *The Economist*, during that period the Soviet Army might, under conditions unspecified, have withdrawn from areas in Eastern Europe without first setting up an alternative for control of the structure of the state by the Politburo. In 1946 the periodical had recommended certain Anglo-American policies which, it had predicted, could lead to separate Soviet peace treaties with Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria, and added:

. . . if those treaties also led to the withdrawal of the Russian occupying forces, the result might not be wholly unfavorable to the chances of democracy—or at least of toleration—in those countries. [April 20, 1946, p. 627.]

Later in the year *The Economist* wrote about a foreign ministers' conference:

. . . the Foreign Ministers have . . . broken the log jam on a number of points, and the concessions have come, as concessions should, from all the contestants. . . Mr. Bevin accepted a clause guaranteeing the withdrawal of Allied troops from Italy not more than ninety days after the conclusion of peace, and Mr. Molotov gave, in return, a similar guarantee for Bulgaria. [June 29, 1946, p. 1040.]

Among the moderate means by which, according to *The Economist*, the Western powers might be able to induce Politburo retreats in Eastern Europe were these: the Politburo regarded agreed-upon peace treaties as valuable and would make concessions to obtain them; also, the Politburo would feel bound in its operations, at least in Europe, by something near to the Western interpretation of the content of such treaties. To these factors *The Economist* attributed a significant role in influencing the power distribution in the area—an estimate presumably not shared by the Politburo. In 1946 *The Economist* said about the delay in the drawing-up of peace treaties for the European satellites of Germany:

It is clearly very damaging to any prospects of reconstruction and recovery to leave seven states in Europe without a definitive political or economic framework. [May 25, 1946, p. 826.]

—a statement which overestimated the role of peace treaties in the construction of the “definitive political and economic framework” which was proceeding in Eastern Europe under the control of the Politburo.

In the same article *The Economist* mentioned the argument that the Politburo might be induced to take an acceptable position on the European peace treaties by the threat of separate treaties on the part of the West. Then, however, *The Economist* commented:

Separate peace settlements in Italy, separate policies in Germany and Austria [on the part of the Western powers], might give the Russians an even freer hand in their own zones and relieve them of the pressure for moderation and conciliation which they must [*sic*] now feel. [*Ibid.*]

In the same year *The Economist* predicted sequels to an overt breakdown of the Politburo-Western attempt to agree on peace terms in Europe:

The Russian zone in Europe would then become in reality a closed world. The influence of the West, which, even now, is considerable in Eastern Europe, would be forcibly eliminated. The existence of different political parties, the degree of freedom of the press (which is great according to Russian standards), the ability of Western journalists and visitors to come and go—all these . . . advantages might be swept away in the wave of war scares which would follow an open breach between Russia and the West. [June 1, 1946, p. 875.]

Conversely, *The Economist* had already predicted:

. . . above all, better relations between the Big Three offer the only hope of restoring constitutional government and legitimate opposition in Eastern Europe. [May 4, 1946, p. 707.]

These predictions, however, implied an overestimation of the weight which the Politburo would attribute to “legal” obstacles in applying the principle of pursuit and also of the degree to which the application of this principle would depend on the prediction of imminent crises. In reality, the Politburo seems to require of itself that it push as far ahead as possible at any given time, regardless of whether the moment is near or distant at which its recent conquests will become a glaxis to be used in case of an attack.

In the same article *The Economist* expressed particularly clearly its belief that Politburo behavior could be substantially influenced by moderate, and not only by extreme, pressure:

A breach would mean the abandonment of any attempt to use Western influence and pressure to modify Soviet policies, either in Russia or elsewhere—and the amount of modification they have undergone is probably far larger than is realized in the West. [June 1, 1946, p. 875.]

This cryptic remark was not further amplified. In a similar vein *The Economist* wrote:

On the vexed question of the freedom of the Danube, progress away from the deadlock has been made by the proposals put forward by Britain and Russia according to which the Four Powers would formally state their confidence (Russia's version) or determination (British version) that the Danube should be open to the trade of all nations. [June 29, 1946, p. 1040.]

This again implied that Western modes of pressure falling far short of ultimatum or attack might induce the Politburo to renounce total control of the Danube within its domain.

## ADVANCE AND RETREAT

The Politburo orientation on expansion is, I believe, not limited, and aims at objectives primarily for the power they will bring. In contrast to this, *The Economist* has tended to assume that Politburo advances after the Second World War have had limited and substantive aims. Thus *The Economist* wrote in 1946 about conferences of the foreign ministers of the Big Four:

At no time, probably, have the Foreign Secretaries sat down together to discuss . . . what their inalienable interests are or to find out whether there is any social and political order in Europe on which they can agree. . . . Between the line of Russia's absolute interests and those of Britain and America there is a fairly wide . . . ground where . . . compromise could . . . be usefully carried on. [April 20, 1946, p. 627.]

More specifically:

Italy lies quite clearly to the west of the dividing line, but sufficiently close to it to provide some justification for Russian interest in Italian affairs. For this reason it might be wise to make some concessions on certain points to Russian views. They might, for example, be given some measure of reparations. . . . [*Ibid.*]

In later years, *The Economist* sometimes went to the opposite extreme in estimating the nature of Politburo expansionism. In 1948 it reviewed the course of negotiations on Berlin:

They dispel any last lingering illusion about the possibility of talking the Russians into a peaceful settlement. They will talk, they will go through the motions of negotiation, but they make no concessions themselves and each concession made to them is simply the prelude to a further demand. [September 25, 1948, p. 481.]

Politburo attempts to advance are apt to have both offensive and defensive motivations. Sometimes *The Economist* seemed to feel that one had to choose one of these possibilities, or that the choice was difficult. Thus the issue of March 16, 1946, contained the passage:

The ultimate purpose of Russia's technique in Persia is an enigma. Is it vaulting ambition? [p. 407.]

On the other hand, it was pointed out in the issue of March 30, 1946, that the Politburo would have maximized its chances

of obtaining an oil concession in northern Iran by withdrawing their troops from Iran as promised:

The only conceivable explanation why it [Moscow] did not proceed in this way lies in fear of the British—or, more accurately, the Anglo-Saxon—economic hold on the Persian Gulf (and, therefore, at least potentially, on the Persian Government) and in anxiety lest this should develop into a drive northwards and a threat to Baku. [p. 482.]

The same issue also spoke of:

. . . the uncertainty whether Russian policy in Persia is born of a genuine persecution complex, or whether it is part of a plan to use UNO as a cloak for intentions which, though they may be limited, are aggressive. This is still, as it always has been, the crucial issue. [p. 481.]

In 1947, *The Economist* wrote about the creation of the Cominform in a vein approaching the conception suggested here:

Is it a declaration of war? Or is it a declaration of defence. . . ?

These alternatives go to the root of the Western world's difficulty in understanding Soviet strategy. It is possible to interpret the . . . record of the last year in terms of a terrified Russia throwing up . . . defences. Marxist theory compels the Russians to believe in an America which is . . . only awaiting the favorable moment for intervention (and armed with the atom bomb). From this conception everything follows. . . .

Equally, however, every line of this strategy can be interpreted in the exactly opposite sense. Marxism . . . believes itself incompatible with any other [orthodoxy]. . . the Russians are imposing their rule on Eastern Europe. They eliminate all opposition. . . They oppose the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan fiercely because they [*sic*] set boundaries to their ambitions. . . Finally the Cominform will use every instrument of propaganda and pressure to ruin any efforts of non-Communist reconstruction.

But which version is true? The difficult fact is that both are true. . . no useful guide to Russian intentions will therefore ever be yielded by analysis. [October 11, 1947, p. 591.]

The last statement, however, seems to be a *non sequitur*.

That the Politburo will advance until it comes up against prohibitive obstacles was repeatedly—and, I believe, correctly—affirmed by *The Economist* throughout the period we are dealing with. In 1946:

The ultimate purpose of Russia's technique in Persia is an enigma. Is it vaulting ambition? Or is it—as seems more likely—a determina-



tion to secure some prepared positions during the period in which, the Russians feel sure, neither the American nor the British public would tolerate entry into war? [March 16, 1946, p. 407.]

But the Politburo presumably did not share *The Economist's* high estimate of the impact of Western "publics" on their governments.

In 1948:

. . . if the Soviet leaders believed that no Western opposition would be encountered, whatever they did, they too might succumb to the temptation to expand. [September 25, 1948, p. 482.]

It would, according to the conception advanced here, have been more correct to say that in the situation indicated the Politburo would feel that it was required to expand.

In 1950:

If the Atlantic Pact were rescinded, American troops and interests withdrawn and a "neutral" Germany and a "neutral" Europe left to face alone . . . their *tête à tête* with the Soviet Union, every evidence of recent history suggests that their fate would be no different from that of President Benes. . . . [May 27, 1950, p. 1154.]

The associated point that the Politburo ceases its attempts to advance when it does come up against prohibitive obstacles was also generally—but not always—acknowledged by *The Economist*. In 1946 *The Economist* enumerated various offensive moves of the Politburo and commented:

How is it possible, in these circumstances, to pretend that the Russians wish for friendly co-operation? What conclusion can be drawn but that their policy is built on invincible hostility and implacable distrust? Why, then, should Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes undertake yet another fruitless pilgrimage? Is it not better that the British and Americans should face facts realistically and, abandoning the search for an agreement that is never reached, concentrate on their own rights and interests?

This, however, is the reaction not of statesmanship but of irritation, and the stakes are too great for petulance. [April 20, 1946, p. 626.]

The implication seems to be that the probability of an offensive move being undertaken by the Politburo is reduced by a "friendly" reaction by its target. In a related vein, *The Economist* said in the same article:

It is precisely during this year, when . . . the armies of the Powers are still not finally demobilized, that the threat of war must be held at bay. [*Ibid.*]

—thus not recognizing that the incompleteness of Western demobilization reduced yet further the probability of war in 1946, which was slight in any case. However, somewhat later *The Economist* did argue in the opposite (and, I believe, more correct) sense:

There is . . . [an] argument in favor of independent Western action [on the European peace treaties blocked by the Soviet Union] which springs from . . . the desire to secure an agreed policy even at the eleventh hour. It is based on the belief that a strong American threat to end the effort at negotiation and, if necessary, to make a separate peace would jolt the Russians into a realization of how far they had stretched the patience of their allies. . . . They might then return to the conference table on June 15th ready to negotiate on a basis of genuine concession and agreement. [May 25, 1946, p. 826.]

Again somewhat later, *The Economist* noted an “easing of the international situation” and mentioned as one of its causes:

. . . probably a growing Russian conviction that a “forward policy” in the Mediterranean is, given Anglo-American hostility, too expensive and risky for the returns it might yield. Accordingly, the Russians have progressively retreated from their claim to a Mandate for Libya, for bases in the Dodecanese or for almost exclusive Yugoslav control, by way of Trieste, in the Adriatic. [July 6, 1946, p. 8.]

However, the passage continued:

They will probably expect an equal abatement of Anglo-American pressure in Eastern Europe.

—which not only overestimated Politburo concern with the moderate “pressures” then exerted by the West in the matter of Eastern Europe, but obscured by introducing *quid pro quo* considerations the fact that the Politburo had ceased its attempts to advance because it had encountered superior obstacles. Hence a statement made in the subsequent issue appears more correct. *The Economist* discussed how, at the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers, the Politburo had abandoned certain attempts to expand beyond the sphere in fact allotted to it at Yalta:

Probably neither Great Britain nor the United States would go to war, say, for Trieste, but the risk of a complete breakdown in Allied

co-operation, leading to a possible atomic struggle in which for the time being the Western Allies would enjoy preponderant strength, has had the same deterrent effect. [July 13, 1946, p. 42.]

Here again the term "co-operation" introduced a false note. Somewhat later again, *The Economist* lost the clear awareness that superior obstacles—the presence of which may well be indicated, under certain conditions, by released or simulated "anger" and "recriminations"—are the only antidote to Politburo attempts to advance:

Mr. Jordan, of New Zealand, last week became the mouthpiece of the impatience widely felt among the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference at what are regarded as the "filibustering" tactics of the Russian bloc. . . . But peace-making is a business at which statesmen must work until it is finished without watching the clock. . . . Tactically, impatience is disastrous, because it gives the advantage to the negotiator who is in no hurry to agree, with the result that the hasty one either makes unnecessary surrenders in bargaining in order to get agreement quickly, or else becomes angry and indulges in futile recriminations at what he regards as malicious delay.

A peace conference should be a leisurely proceeding, as it used to be in the old days. . . . there is much room for improvement in tempers at the Luxembourg, and the world might well feel reassured at the news that the Foreign Ministers, instead of another round of ideological backchat, had spent a summer day bathing in the Seine, or had been seen on a merry-go-round at a fair in Vincennes. The prospects of peace would be better if the delegates, instead of wondering whether they can get their work finished before UNO is due to meet, were to prepare for several months of good, hard, unemotional horse-trading varied by as much incidental diversion as Paris can provide. [August 24, 1946, p. 288.]

But toward the end of the year *The Economist* said, in accord with the view presented here, about the Soviet concessions at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in New York:

This may . . . be due to the traditional methods of Russian diplomacy in which bargaining is pressed to the uttermost limit, until it is clear that the opponents will not budge another inch. Then, at this point, the concessions—often surprising concessions—are made. Mr. Molotov may have at last become convinced that neither Mr. Bevin nor Mr. Byrnes would give way further. Accordingly, he has surrendered. [December 7, 1946, p. 899.]

Similarly, in 1948, *The Economist* affirmed:

... that it may be necessary to carry firmness to a quite dangerous stage before the Russian representatives in Berlin can inform Moscow that they have reached sticking point . . . [April 3, 1948, p. 535.]

—a reaction, one might add, which would deprive extreme “firmness” of its apparent “dangers.”

Recognizing this, *The Economist*, throughout the period considered, discussed the advisability of indicating explicitly to the Politburo, in advance, which offensive moves on its part would induce war. In 1946 it said:

The weakness of the Western Powers, hitherto, is that they do not appear to have decided where their paramount interests lie, or at least they have been chary of committing themselves. The result has been a Russian advance . . . into the no-man's land of international debate and on into dangerous proximity to the Western forward line. The only way of avoiding direct collision now is to state . . . where the collision would inevitably occur. . . . If Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes could bring this degree of clarity into Great Power relations, there would be less danger of their stumbling on each other and falling to fighting in the dark. [April 20, 1946, p. 627.]

In 1948:

... the Western Powers' best hope of peace lies in making it perfectly clear at what point Russian action might precipitate war.

... The line must be clearly drawn and the world—including the Russians themselves—must be given the conviction that any infringement of it will be resisted to the utmost. [September 25, 1948, p. 482.]

On the other hand, *The Economist* was less clear on the point that only an ultimatum or an attack would induce the Politburo to consent to any impairment of its control over any part of its domain. It would follow from this point that, since 1945, the Politburo has at no time been prepared to accept any reduction of its potential or actual control over Eastern Germany on any terms the West might offer. *The Economist*, however, wrote in 1946:

The opening salvo in the Foreign Ministers' discussion of Germany was fired by Mr. Molotov. . . . most of his points are ones on which Allied unity should not be too difficult to achieve. . . . As soon as the Russians agree to an Allied Commission of Inquiry to cover not only military establishments but also munitions factories, a regular system can probably be set in motion. [July 13, 1946, p. 48.]

And in the week following:

It remains true that a policy of organizing the Western zones [of Germany] in isolation from the East is preferable to an indefinite continuation of the present vacuum of policy, in which the Russians, in substance, do as they please in their own zone but exercise a veto on British and American policy in the West. . . . Meanwhile, however, it would be surely worth their [the Western powers'] while to examine once again the question whether a measure of agreement with the Russians is not still possible and whether a compromise cannot still be achieved. . . .

. . . Mr. Molotov wants a central government [in Germany], a unified Reich, . . . and disarmament. Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes want . . . a long period of control over German disarmament. Indeed on disarmament, the chief difference is that Mr. Byrnes has offered twenty-five years of control and Mr. Molotov wants forty. [July 20, 1946, p. 84.]

In 1947:

The empirical, not to say contradictory, character of Russian diplomacy has been more apparent in recent weeks than perhaps at any other time. At one time, agreement and understanding appeared to be the basis of Soviet diplomacy. The Russian concessions on the satellite treaties, the agreed agenda for Moscow, the series of interviews given by Mr. Stalin to the Press, all couched in conciliatory terms, have not only broken the prolonged diplomatic log jam of 1946; they have even led to better hopes for agreement over . . . the settlement with Germany.

Yet in recent weeks it is precisely over the settlement with Germany that the other face of Russia's Janus head has pulled its worst grimaces. [February 15, 1947, p. 271.]

About the impending Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers:

The British and Americans . . . will want a definite answer from the Russians whether they intend to observe the Potsdam Agreement, whether the food and industrial resources of Eastern Germany are to be pooled with those of the West. [March 8, 1947, p. 316.]

However, in 1948, *The Economist* said about the *de facto* partition of Germany:

There is nothing particularly new in this melancholy situation. Russian tactics have been pursuing the same ends since the firing stopped in 1945. But the Anglo-American hope of greater co-operation has lingered on, obstructing the formation of fresh policy and clogging the wheels of thought. The *coup d'état* in Prague . . . should banish once and for all the idea that the Russians in their present mood can share the political and economic control of anything. . . . [February 28, 1948, p. 332.]

But in 1949 *The Economist* again lost awareness of the fact that Politburo retreats can be induced only by extreme means, the use of which *The Economist* was not considering:

... the prize [for the West] ... is now clearly coming within sight—all Germany for the West. [May 14, 1949, p. 875.]

In 1950, realism (according to my construction) expressed itself anew in a discussion of the possibilities of unifying and neutralizing Germany:

There is nothing to suggest that the Russians are prepared to dismantle their police state. Their unavowed aim is ... to extend its control. [April 8, 1950, p. 754.]

By 1950 *The Economist* had moved far beyond its position in 1946—when it described Soviet objections to international atomic control as related to Soviet secretiveness—to a greatly increased awareness that the Politburo would resist anything but extreme pressure:

... there is likely to be strong pressure in Moscow for a firm stand on "national sovereignty" and no Paul Prys on Soviet soil. Yet there have recently been some signs that the unanimity of opinion in ruling circles in Russia is not quite as monolithic as it should be in Communist theory, and it may be that if world opinion outside Russia is strongly aroused in favor of international atomic control with inspection, even the NKVD may be unable to keep out the influence. ... [October 12, 1946, p. 572.]

#### NEGOTIATING WITH THE ENEMY

That the Politburo does not sentimentalize over "agreements" or "settlements" as certain Western policy-makers tend to do, remained for a long time unrecognized, or unexpressed, by *The Economist*, as previously quoted passages have shown. An additional instance can be taken from *The Economist* in 1946, when it said about the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers:

... it would be untrue to say that maneuvering for strategic position against the possibility of future conflict was the only characteristic of the Paris Conference. ... towards the end of last week ... the Foreign Ministers ... fell again to informal negotiation which, in two days, produced two striking results. ... It did seem ... that the wheels of genuine negotiation were at last moving. [May 18, 1946, pp. 790-91.]

Thus *The Economist* was unable to recognize the strict impossibility of "genuine negotiation" with the Politburo, even while stressing its extreme difficulty and rarity. The passage continued:

All hopes that these mutual concessions would open a phase of genuine negotiation were, however, dashed when Mr. Molotov refused to consider . . . Thereafter, the conference . . . returned to a sort of political *rigor mortis*. [*Ibid.*]

However, in the autumn of 1948 *The Economist* wrote:

. . . what was suspected years ago by a few, and what was apparent months ago to many, has now been proved to the public—namely, that agreement with the Russian Communists is impossible. It is only the proof that is new, not the fact. Moreover, it is important to note what it is that is now proved—that the Russians are not interested in international harmony. There is no more proof than there ever was that they mean to make war. [October 2, 1948, p. 521.]

And in 1950:

The fallacy in the idea of a limited agreement [on armament control] at this stage lies in supposing that the Soviet Union is interested in friendship. It is . . . concerned with the creation of a Communist world order, and agreements and failures to agree alike are regarded simply as stepping stones to this final end. [February 18, 1950, p. 353.]

In the negotiations from the autumn of 1945 to the spring of 1950, the Politburo presumably felt that the penalties of nonagreement were light—merely a failure to advance beyond the Yalta-Potsdam positions which, in any case, the Politburo probably did not expect greatly to improve by diplomacy (so that the rewards of success in negotiation were also likely to be minor). In contrast to this, *The Economist* tended to attribute very considerable significance to success or failure in international conferences, and tended to imply that such estimates were shared by the Politburo. Thus they wrote in the spring of 1946, treating with much importance agreements which hardly touched the world distribution of power:

For the time at least, the winter of discontent seems to be fading in the Councils of the Great Powers. After the autumn deadlock of London and the Christmastide disappointments of Moscow, Paris in the spring seems to promise better things. . . . For the first time in its history, the Security Council has reached what was very nearly a unanimous decision on a controversial subject. On April 28th, ten of the eleven members voted for the Australian resolution, which

repeats the Great Powers' moral condemnation of the Franco regime and appoints a committee to enquire into the question whether and how much Franco's Government represents a threat to international peace. The Russians decided not to block this resolution by exercising their right of veto, and for the occasion the proposal for a committee of enquiry was tacitly accepted as a question of procedure. Everyone knew that in fact it was a question of substance, but everyone knew equally that if it were so regarded, a Russian abstention would amount to a veto. . . . it seemed better to allow the anomaly to pass. . . .

On the other side of the Atlantic at the Paris Conference, the Russians in their new mood of conciliation have already ended the deadlock which brought the London Conference to a standstill—the question of France's participation in the discussion of all the peace treaties—and have suggested a way around the other—the future of Tripoli. . . .

Why the change? Why so long a diplomatic deadlock ending in so mild a resolution? It is difficult to find a really adequate reason. . . . if optimism be permitted to break in for a moment, may not the new atmosphere give some hope that at last the immediate post-war tensions are beginning to relax? [May 4, 1946, p. 703.]

And:

. . . the arguments against risking an open breach between the Allies are . . . cogent. To accept a permanent rift, to base the post-war settlement on two worlds—a Russian and a non-Russian—must make for friction and endless rivalry, and if the unhappy history of the past is any guide, lead ultimately to war. [May 25, 1946, p. 826.]

According to the Politburo, on the other hand, the very structure of the era was that of a "permanent rift" between "two worlds" with "endless friction" between them. Whether an "open breach" occurred or not, would, in the presumable estimates of the Politburo, have but little influence on the occurrence of war. It was this attitude which *The Economist* approached in an isolated passage in the spring of 1946:

. . . it is melodramatic to the point of absurdity to suppose that a failure to agree on the peace treaties means an inevitable and early war between East and West. . . . it would do nothing to alter the existing balance of forces upon which the chances of peace and war depend. [June 1, 1946, p. 875.]

However, *The Economist* soon resumed its habitual high appraisal of the significance of success and failure in negotiations between the Politburo and the West:



At last, after months of inconclusive bargaining, the Foreign Ministers appear to be on the verge of reaching agreement on the draft of the Italian Treaty. . . .

This easing of the international situation is all the more remarkable when it is compared with the mood of pessimism and even the war scares which followed the breakdown of the first Paris Conference in May. Then it seemed that no resources of diplomacy and no last reserves of good will could prevent Europe from falling into two hostile spheres and the international community from degenerating into "two worlds." Yet, furnished with new instructions, the Foreign Ministers returned to Paris to show more flexibility and ability to compromise at the renewed conference than at any time in the last nine dreary months. [July 6, 1946, p. 8.]

And:

What can be said of the settlement which is now to be considered by the general Peace Conference? The most hopeful and most important thing about it is not perhaps its content, but the fact that it exists at all. The deadlock between the Powers was so long and so dreary and apparently so unbreakable that their ability finally to compromise, to keep open the channels of diplomacy and to remain, however nominally, united nations is a matter for some . . . gratitude. [July 13, 1946, p. 42.]

Also:

. . . the outlook for the peace of the world will be poor indeed if the Great Powers can do no better in their future negotiations than barely fail to disagree. [July 13, 1946, p. 43.]

As to the discussion of Germany at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Paris:

The Russians' intolerable obstinacy and secretiveness had obviously reduced Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes by the end of the discussions to the desperate desire to cut loose from their infuriating Ally at any cost. Two factors ought, however, to persuade them . . . to postpone a drastic break. The first is the grimness of the alternative policy. . . . [July 20, 1946, p. 84.]

For:

. . . patient negotiation on a Big Four basis is the only means by which . . . the rivalry of the Great Powers [can be] kept from deteriorating into dangerous hostility. [October 19, 1946, p. 611.]

Later in the year, however, *The Economist* approached the view of the situation taken here:

In a process of bargaining . . . it may be that one party really is unwilling to buy or sell except on his own terms, and in that case the

other party has either to accept his terms or give up the transaction. In the present international situation it is necessary to reckon with the possibility that the rulers of Russia feel they can do without any settlement at all better than can the Western Powers. [November 30, 1946, p. 863.]

—or rather, than the Western powers *feel* they can.

In negotiation, the Politburo does not consider issues on their “merits,” but solely from the point of view of power—an attitude which for a long time seemed, as it were, abnormal to *The Economist*, which wrote in 1946 about the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers:

... suspicion has grown to such a pitch that no single issue could be considered on its merits. [May 18, 1946, p. 790.]

Later in that year *The Economist* said about the draft treaties with Germany’s satellites:

Each clause has been discussed not as the component part of a rational European order but as a pawn in the ... struggle between East and West. ... [December 14, 1946, p. 939.]

According to the Politburo a process of negotiation is apt to be filled with expressions of hostility, after which an agreement may be reached. However, according to a frequently expressed view by *The Economist* there is a negative correlation between the level of hostility during negotiation and its success. Thus *The Economist* wrote in 1946:

At no time, probably, have the Foreign Secretaries sat down together to discuss with complete frankness what their inalienable interests are or to find out whether there is any social and political order in Europe on which they can agree. Temperamentally, the present Foreign Secretaries are too far apart to make the attempt and probably suspicion and hostility have gone too far to make agreement possible. [April 20, 1946, p. 627.]

And:

The Foreign Ministers have returned to Paris and the preliminary bouts in their diplomatic wrestling match do not bode well for final agreement. [June 22, 1946, p. 999.]

In the week following, *The Economist* noted the achievement of certain compromises by the Foreign Ministers’ Conference, but went on to say:

But having listed the new compromises, we must admit that the psychological auguries are bad. Irritation and frustration have quickly replaced the evident good will of the first days. In such an atmosphere, the patient search for the inch of extra compromise gives place to the gesture of irritability that brings all search to an end. [June 29, 1946, p. 1040.]

Again:

The Paris [Peace] Conference is only in its second week; but already from the first week, almost from its first ceremonial session, it has been gripped by a queer and, at first sight, baffling psychosis—the psychosis of an uninterrupted and unmitigated rivalry between the Western Powers and Russia. [August 10, 1946, p. 217.]

What appears to the Politburo as the essence of world politics in this era appears here as the sudden outbreak of a “psychosis.”

According to the Politburo, pressure (apart from *quid pro quo*’s) is the only device by which the behavior of negotiation partners can be favorably modified. But in 1946 *The Economist* advocated toward the Politburo “the policy of patience” as against “the policy of a breach”:

... time may show that ... at the expenditure of infinite labor, agreed solutions can be achieved. [June 1, 1946, p. 875.]

The implication seems to be that by “labor” other than pressure the Politburo can in some way be reformed—e.g., its level of “suspicion” somewhat reduced.

In the same year *The Economist* affirmed that the Foreign Ministers’ Conference might be able to find a compromise on the question of Italian reparations to the Soviet Union, and added:

And concessions at this point could perhaps ease the way when the much more difficult issues on the agenda come up for discussion. [June 22, 1946, p. 999.]

Yet here, as elsewhere, it seems clear that such a statement involves an assumption about Soviet behavior which does not coincide with what I consider at present to be the operational code of the Politburo.

It may be argued, of course, that the hypotheses which I have set off against the comments of *The Economist* are erroneous or dubious. The point nevertheless remains that the effectiveness of

foreign policy depends upon the accuracy of the assumptions made about the conduct of other participants in world politics. The basic goals of American policy may be the same today as they were seven years ago, but the means to their realization have undergone great transformation. A reason for this is the changed position of the Soviet Union.

As the preceding pages may show, one of the most difficult issues on the internal agenda of the West has been, and still is, the correct construction of the operational code of its antagonist. Indeed, these pages seem to suggest that the construction of such a code should not be left to the necessities of a particular situation, or to intuition, however illuminating. It should rather be the result of continuing research, to increase the chance of avoiding the dangerous temptation to view the other in one's own image.